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THE

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GENERAL announcements are made by the American Institute of Sacred Literature that a Summer School for the Study of Hebrew, other Semitic Languages and the Old Testament, New Testament Greek and the English Bible, Old and New Testaments, will be held under the auspices of the Boston Local Board at the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass., for three weeks beginning June 22d. At Chautauqua, N. Y., the Institute will hold two schools of a similar character, for six weeks, beginning July 4th. The Chicago Local Board will also hold a Summer School for three weeks beginning Aug. 15th. The methods of work and the opportunities for study in the Summer Schools of the Institute are known to readers of the STUDENT. More definite information concerning courses and instructors will be furnished at an early date.

SOME considerations offered in these pages concerning "the misfortunes of the Bible" in the course of its history, from its first arrangement down to its final interpretation in life, have incurred in certain quarters some criticism which is founded on a complete misapprehension of the aim and issue of those suggestions. The STUDENT is not conducted as an organ of controversy and it is not the purpose here to answer those criticisms or to emphasize the truth of the positions already taken. They commend themselves as simple statements of fact, rather under than over the truth—from the point of view of a biblical student of the present day. From another point of view, which is just as legitimate and reasonable, these facts may stand in different relations and thus come to have, in these altered relations, a significance,

more encouraging, while not less true. With the larger and truer conceptions of the Scripture which have come to this age, the mistakes and errors of those who in past generations have received the heritage of the Bible may seem deplorable. One may be inclined to argue that any other less puissant body of literature would have perished under such handling. He may thus conclude that only a *Divine* Book could have survived—a conclusion arrived at in the editorial notes just alluded to, which aroused the animadversions of critics, who seem to have read everything but the conclusion. Still it is true that one is not dealing quite fairly with the Bible students of past generations, if he demands of them the scholarship of the present. He forgets that to-day's position is held, only because yesterday and the day before somebody struggled up from a lower point and gained the field, from which the height on which we stand was won. The vicissitudes through which the Bible has passed, the misfortunes to which it has been subjected, are, from this point of view, seen to be only examples of the universal Divine method of educating man and disclosing truth. These mistakes in dealing with it were all in the line of progress, they were misfortunes which were blessings in disguise, because they are part of an historic process, by which God in His wisdom will at last make the complete sphere of His Truth to appear without dimness in glory.

PERHAPS the most obvious remark in considering this aspect of the subject is that the Bible which we have with all its misfortunes is better than no Bible at all. Does one quarrel with the arrangement of the books? Who can tell whether the Prophetic Books would ever have come down to us, if they had not been collected in what scholars to-day are inclined to regard as unscientific disorder. Certainly those who regret that the Psalms are not organized on some intelligible basis of classification, are making a demand on the original editors, which would have resulted in the loss of the finest poems in that collection. Better two Isaiahs or four, if you please, conglomerated into the present Book of Isaiah to the despair of the critical scholar, than the absence of any

one of them because, forsooth, the Bible ought to have been arranged on modern scientific principles. The same thing is true of the transmission of the Bible. Better any transmission, however uncritically done; better any translation, however imperfect; better any interpretation, however crude, narrow and astray, if it came out of sincere and honest hearts; better any re-production of the Truth in human lives, however feeble and mingled with earthliness;—than none of these at all. For such, after all, is the alternative—these or nothing. It is not a question of what God might have done, though, even then, some would argue that God Himself *could* not have given us a different Bible than that we possess. It is a question of historical facts. So far as one can know the past, it is safe to say, Demand a Bible from the fathers, which shall not be liable to the misfortunes which modern scholarship notes in the case of that Book which has come down to us,—and you will get no Bible at all.

A FURTHER step, however, may be taken. What may by our age be regarded as a mistaken and perverse treatment of the Bible is not necessarily mistaken and perverse for the age in which the Bible was thus treated. Some one may regard it as lamentable that Origen subjected the Scriptures to the trivialities of his allegorizing interpretation and thus gave an impulse to fanciful and unsubstantial notions which has been felt all the days since. But he with all his errors was the first real student of the Scriptures since the apostolic age, and his system, with all its crudities, was the first real systematic attempt to interpret the Bible, and thus both the man and his work proved a blessing to his age. The same reply may be made to the scholar vexed by the way in which chapters and verses are divided in our Bibles, so misleading to the uninstructed. The blessing, which such a division with all its errors was, compared with the cumbrous methods which had gone before, can scarcely be estimated. And so the argument might be pursued through all the so-called, and, indeed, real, “misfortunes” of the Bible—real to us, but in their time marks and means of progress in the knowledge of the Word of God.

EVEN more important is it to observe that those very misfortunes contain the elements on which the enlightened biblical scholarship of the present day is built. They have, practically, turned out to be blessings even to us. The thought deserves to be considered somewhat in detail:

(1) Were the books in the beginning unhappily arranged? The growing consciousness of this fact among earnest students has led to a more profound study in search of the real, vital, historical connections and relations of the biblical literature, of which we are enjoying the first-fruits to-day. Has this unsatisfactory arrangement of Scripture resulted in obscuring for long periods of time much biblical teaching which men ought to have known? By this mischance, if it be such, it has been given to us almost to discover a new Bible, new views of truth, new lights upon life, real additions to the power and range of revelation, while none of the might of the old Bible has been lost. The Scriptures have gained a unity from this re-arrangement in historical relations such as they never before were seen to possess.

(2) Do scholars find much to lament in the way the Bible was transmitted? Are they baffled in their search for the original text of the Old Testament by the want of manuscript material, while in the New Testament they are hindered by the multiplicity of it? Has the knowledge of the Word of God suffered thereby? All this is undoubtedly true. Yet as a result we have to-day a wonderfully close re-production of the actual words of the New Testament literature and men are studying the versions, especially the Septuagint, with a zeal and success, with an influence upon all spheres of biblical learning, which in other circumstances would never have been known.

(3) The case is peculiarly clear as regards the misfortunes of the Bible from its translators. How defective each of these versions is! How colored with the views of the age in which it appeared! How unhappy the condition of that Book which must submit to such maltreatment and misrepresentation! Yet, each translation, in itself imperfect, was in some respect a distinct advance upon its predecessors. Each made its successor possible; each made its successor a better

work. Our Revised Version is the outcome of a process which has included many erroneous translations, many defective versions. By so many "misfortunes" has the Bible come in so correct and so rich and racy an English vernacular to the Bible students of the present day.

(4) Are the various interpretations of Scripture a source of weariness and uncertainty to the student? Shall we commiserate the Book which so many have twisted into conformity with their favorite notions? This may well be done. But almost every interpretation has had its elements of truth. The over-emphasizing by the Reformers on the one hand of their views of the Bible, and the similar work of the Romanists on the other, have given us a broader and better idea of Scriptural doctrine. It is far better than if an infallible interpretation had been handed down from the first. As the outcome of all this the present age has a truer view of the sphere of biblical truth and holds it more clearly and strongly.

IF in the course of these suggestions any one underlying fact has made itself felt, it is that the Bible, in spite of its misfortunes and by means of them, was never a greater Book than it is to day. It never was known so well; it never was more powerful in its influence; it never appeared more Divine. This is what is to be expected, since it came from the living God and since the progressive apprehension of its teachings has been under His immediate supervision. He has made no mistake in permitting His Book to suffer from so many "misfortunes." Men have erred in their use of it, but He has used their errors for the blessing of mankind. Such has been the history of the Bible in the past. Such is its history to-day. We, with all our light and knowledge of it, will fall into mistakes regarding it, which the generations to follow will mark and above which they will rise. May we be kept from one mistake, the worst of all—that dealing with it which studies its teachings but practically denies its truth and power. The Book which we profess to believe and obey—may we never betray it in our lives.